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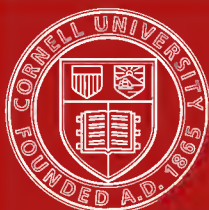
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THE BOLSHEVIST PUBLICATIONS

AND FRENCH POLICY

(Black Book and Yellow Book)

by

J. ROMIEU

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

by

C. HEYWOOD

« Unfortunately public opinion in
the various countries is not demobilised. The remains of the war propaganda are still circulating and deaden the atmosphere. »

RATHENAU at Genoa, 19-5-1922.

PARIS

ALFRED COSTES, PUBLISHER
8, RUE MONSIEUR-LE-PRINCE, 8

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1922

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Black Book and Yellow Book

The enemies of France are making a great to-do about a book recently published under the title : « A BLACK BOOK » — « Prewar Diplomacy, as revealed by documents in the Russian State Records — November 1910-July 1914 ».

Such « revelations » might very well be passed by without notice, were it not for the fact that they afford an opportunity and a pretext for a skilfully directed campaign of slander. « It starts as a mere breath, trailing along the ground... » Gradually, with the help of an insidious propaganda, the authors of which are not far to seek, a full grown Legend rears its head. It is stated positively that the Russian diplomatic records have at last given up their secrets, to the dire confusion of the responsible leaders of French policies.

As far back as in 1912, by rashly pledging the word of France in respect of the applicability of the *casus foederis* with Russia, our diplomacy is held to have encouraged the secret activities of the Czar's Minister in Paris, M. Iswolsky, and to have thus launched the country upon the dark avenues that led to the bloodstained fields of the World War. In the eyes of such as reason thus, the Balkan Campaign of 1912 was but the prelude and harbinger of the War of 1914, and if we bear in mind the fact that the present head of the French Government was in office from January 1912 to February 1913, the use that can be made of such a controversy for the purpose of

fanning national passions will be realised without the slightest difficulty.

The attention of the French authorities was recently called to the broadcast distribution — more particularly in the Frankfort factories, and by the agency of the « Committee of Action of the German Trade Unions », the headquarters of which are in Berlin — of a pamphlet entitled « One of the Chief Culprits of the World War unmasked ! The Poincaré Affair » This precious document, published in the shape of a leaflet intended to be very widely circulated, turns for its facts solely to the Bolchevist publications.

There is no arguing with sentimental reasons. Yet if a sentiment that is hostile to us puts on, the better to injure us, an appearance of scientific study ; if dispatches are first mutilated, and then quoted as if they were given in full ; if documents calculated to upset the case of the adversary are deliberately ignored, does it not behove us to examine such documents critically, while duly taking into consideration the circumstances in which the statesmen then in office were actually placed ?

This is what we propose to attempt here with all the accuracy vital to a work of documentation.

In the first place what is this *Black Book* ?

The colour of its binding might tempt us to reply : « It looks more like a *Brown Book* ».

But the author of the publication, M. René Marchand, Sadoul's secretary in Moscow, forestalls this remark by saying in the introduction :

« In calling this publication a « Black Book » we have departed from the diplomatic usage whereby the title of a book is made to depend upon the colour of its binding, but this departure is fully justified by the nature of the contents, for they serve to expose the sinister diplomacy

which, under cover of a lying democracy, actually shapes the destinies of the peoples it enslaves » (1).

The work itself is a compilation, affording a vast wealth of references : secret records of the Russian Foreign Ministry ; political records ; copies of telegrams and reports from various countries.

We have been given as yet but Vol. 1.

The 372 pages it comprises cover the period from December 14, 1910 (2), to December 29, 1912. It ought therefore to contain if not the whole, then at least the chief documents of M. Iswolsky's diplomatic correspondence during the Balkan crisis in 1912, those that are practically vital to a proper estimate of the political dealings of the Allied Nation's representative in France.

Now it so happens the French diplomatic records have likewise been thrown open for that period, and a *Yellow Book* (January 1912 to the armistice of Chataldja, December 3, 1912) has just been issued to Parliament.

Again, a former secretary of the Russian Embassy in London, Mr B. von Siebert, published in 1920 a compilation dealing with the diplomatic correspondence of the Russian Ambassadors in the leading capitals from 1910 to 1914 (3).

With its disregard for chronological order, and the arbitrary classification of its component parts, this publication can hardly be looked upon as a model of scientific precision. It will, however, supply us with certain elements of appreciation that will be found useful for the purpose of checking the statements made in the *Black Book*.

(1) *Black Book*, p. 7.

(2) These dates are given in accordance with the Gregorian calendar.

(3) V. Siebert : *Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Geschichte der Entente-politik der Vorkriegsjahre*, Berlin 1920.

The moment, therefore, is not ill chosen for examining into the spirit in which our diplomacy was conducted during the Balkan crisis of 1912.

Restricting ourselves exclusively to the elucidation of this question, we shall be able to study the documents contained in the *Black Book* in the light of the *Yellow Book* and of M. von Siebert's compilation, to point out the gaps and omissions in the former work and to show, for instance, how certain documents vital to a correct appreciation of the question of bringing into play the *casus foederis*, as between France and Russia, such as the written account drawn up by M. Sazonoff after his conversation with M. Poincaré, in August 1912, have been deliberately omitted.

The Eastern Question and the Franco-Russian Alliance

On January 27, 1912, M. Iswolsky called at the Foreign Ministry in Paris and expressed to M. Poincaré his earnest desire that France and Russia should take counsel together in view of forthcoming complications in the Near East (1).

This date of January 27 should be carefully noted, for it was just over a month later, February 29, that was signed at Sofia, between Bulgaria and Serbia, the first of the agreements whereon was based the Balkan League — Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro — intended to deal with such difficulties as might eventually arise in the Balkans, following upon the war between Italy and Turkey.

In what circumstances were these agreements, which were completed, on April 29, again with Serbia, on May, 16, with Greece, and on September 22, with Montenegro, instituted ?

In his book the *Balkan Alliance*, M. E. Guechof, the Bulgarian Prime Minister, lays claim to the authorship of this Alliance, but the Russian documents tend to show (2) that ever since the spring of 1909, when M. Iswolsky was directing the Russian policy at St. Petersburg, the Czar's Government had done their best to bring about the

(1) *Yellow Book*, No 3.

(2) V. Siebert, p. 137 et seq.

formation of this Balkan League and had never ceased to take an interest in that scheme.

In approaching the French Government, M. Iswolsky therefore aimed at no less than the resumption in 1912 of Prince Lobanoff's policy of 1896 and at persuading France to raise the whole Eastern question once more.

The Russian Government, indeed, thought the occasion most favourable, by reason of the war between Italy and Turkey.

The Balkan States had put an end to their rivalries. Fired by a common ideal and having momentarily found a means of reconciling their several ambitions, they looked forward to the settlement of the Macedonian issue and to the satisfaction of their national aspirations, under the aegis of the Czar's Government.

To what extent could Russia depend upon her Ally in view of the complications that were bound to result from the formation of the Balkan League ?

The full significance of the Russian move of January 27 will not escape our readers. As was pointed out by the French Ambassador in St. Petersburg, M. G. Louis, the object of the Czar's Government, in instructing their ambassador to take this step, was primarily « to find out just how far we should be likely to back up Russia in her policy towards Austria-Hungary and Turkey » (1).

Did it behove us to depart from our traditional policy in the East for the sake of gratifying the wishes of our Ally, or were we to keep up the conversation merely for the purpose of ascertaining what were her real designs and of exerting a moderating influence over her.

In his lectures on the Origins of the War (2), M. Poin-

(1) *Yellow Book*, N° 30.

(2) Poincaré : *The Origins of the War*, p. 123.

caré recalls the fact that in January 1912 the Government he led found the ties between the two countries somewhat relaxed in consequence of various circumstances : conflicting interests, as between the French and the Russians, in the matter of concessions relating to the Anatolian railways ; an international syndicate that had been formed in China for the working of yet further railway lines, a body in which America, England, Germany and France were represented, while Russia had, foolishly enough, been excluded.

Taking into consideration both the requirements of our policy and conditions in the Balkans, which became more and more uncertain, the longer the war lasted between Italy and Turkey, M. Poincaré was of opinion that here was a remarkably favourable opportunity for French diplomacy to find out the views of our Ally as regards the various possibilities of the Eastern problem, and « to ascertain whether or not the Russian Government had yet surrendered any part of their liberty of action » (1).

Such was the general purport of the reply handed to the Czar's representative, on January 29.

What evidence does the *Black Book* bring to bear on this point ?

The position taken up by the French Government in the circumstances we have just described would be a matter of the highest moment for the Czar's Government, nor could their Ambassador in Paris fail to advise them instantly of the result of his approaches.

Now the *Black Book* makes no mention of this exchange of views, in spite of the fact that it marks the first coming into contact of the French and the Russian diplomacy, in this early phase of the Balkan crisis.

(1) *Yellow Book*, N° 3.

We are indeed given, at the end of January and in the early days of February, telegrams and dispatches from M. Iswolsky with reference to the debates in the French Chamber, to the electoral reform, the call of a French squadron at Malta, the floating of a Persian loan, the issue of the bonds of the Crédit Foncier in the Isle of Cuba, the question of the secret reports on army officers, the demonstrations at the Père-Lachaise Cemetery on the occasion of the funeral of the mutineer Aernoult, and the debates in the Senate on the Franco-German agreement.

But from January 18 to February 28, not a word as regards our reply. Not before February 29, i.e. after a month's interval, do we find in a private letter, bearing no number the first mention of the French Government's interest in the matter.

« After giving an account of a conversation dealing with the affairs of Italy and Turkey and the necessity of establishing beforehand a common standpoint, as between St. Petersburg and Paris, M. Iswolsky adds « In this connection, M. Poincaré reminded me once more that he was prepared at any moment to enter into conversation with us about the Balkan developments » (1).

Let us look into the matter yet further.

In pursuance of their plan of binding down French diplomacy to the support of their Eastern policy, the Russian Government made a further move on February 14, when they handed to the French Ambassador at St. Petersburg a list of questions raising, as M. G. Louis himself pointed out, « all the issues wherewith Russia can possibly confront her Ally » (2). The contingencies dealt with in this document are not only a domestic government crisis in Turkey

(1) *Black Book*, p. 203.

(2) *Yellow Book*, N° 13.

and an Austrian action in the Sanjak, but also an armed conflict between Turkey and the Balkan League that was about to be constituted a few days later.

In the selfsame month of February, moreover, our representatives duly reported the military preparations the Russians were making in the Caucasus, their traditional means of pressure for bringing Turkey to terms.

On March 14 the French Premier, who had not replied as yet to the Russian list of questions of February 14, asked M. Iswolsky bluntly what construction was to be put upon these military preparations.

« The Government of the French Republic, he stated, has always interpreted our alliance as implying that any initiative unprovided for in the original compact, or, in other words, any action in the sphere of general politics that is not essentially in the nature of a countermove to an actual or impending aggression by Germany imposes upon both the Allies the obligation of previously conferring together. Now M. Sazonoff recently imparted to M. Louis the assurance that the Imperial Government would undertake no move in the East without informing us of the fact beforehand. But it is not sufficient that you should *inform* us of your intentions ; it is necessary that we should have *conferred* together on the subject » (1).

M. Iswolsky having replied that there could be no doubt in that respect. M. Poincaré went on to say : « That being the case, I am quite ready to consider with you the contingencies alluded to in this set of questions. But the serious character of the issues to be dealt with — for they raise the whole question of the balance of power in Europe — makes it incumbent upon me to discuss the matter with the Cabinet. I may as well warn you at once, how-

(1) *Yellow Book*, N° 17.

ever, that France stands fast by the traditional principles of her policy in the East, namely the integrity of the Turkish Empire and the preservation of the *status quo* in the Balkans » (1).

Can that be called encouraging the secret activities of the Russian Government ?

On this particular point, moreover, the *Black Book* adduces evidence of its own, which bears out the testimony of the *Yellow Book*.

In a letter dated March 15, M. Iswolsky reports the above conversation to M. Sazonoff : « This statement (about the two countries advising each other of their intentions, and not conferring thereon) was a matter of great concern to M. Poincaré, who carefully read over all the documents relating to the Franco-Russian conventions and political agreements, and came to the conclusion that under those conventions France and Russia were bound, notably in the event of certain contingencies liable to threaten the cause of peace, to *confer together* and not merely to *forewarn* one another of their intentions » (2).

This demand for more definite information put forward by M. Poincaré, as revealed to us by the *Yellow Book* and confirmed by the *Black Book*, should have proved a sufficient warning to the Czar's Government. But the very man whose duty it was to keep St. Petersburg informed of the views of the Government to which he was accredited, happened to be the man chiefly responsible for that Slav policy, which he himself initiated when in charge of the Russian diplomatic service.

It is not for us to vouch for the genuineness of the diplomatic papers included in M. von Siebert's compilation,

(1) *Yellow Book*, N° 17.

(2) *Black Book*, p. 218.

yet one cannot but wonder at certain departures ascribed to Russia. As a case in point, if these papers are to be believed, M. Iswolsky, then Foreign Minister, dispatched as far back as April 1909, the following telegram to his Minister at Belgrade :

« We have not ceased to view with the utmost sympathy the idea of a *rapprochement* between Bulgaria and Serbia, and to favour a common action on the part of these two Powers, with a view to the prevention of misunderstandings that might prove dangerous to Slavonic interests generally.

« I have expressed myself to this effect, to the Bulgarian Minister here, who assured me that Bulgaria wishes to act in close conjunction with Serbia. I am imparting this communication to our Minister at Sofia, and Paprikof intends to take up the matter on his return to Bulgaria. It is desirable that Serbia shall exercise great self-control in respect of the Turkish crisis and above all that neither by any action, nor by unconsidered negotiations shall she afford Austria-Hungary a pretext for interfering in the Turkish question. Express yourself confidentially to this effect with Milowanovitch » (1).

It may be opportune to recall this precedent, just as we are coming to April 1, 1912, for this was the day when the Russian Ambassador in Paris first took the French Government into his confidence as regards the existence of the secret Serbo-Bulgarian agreement, concluded on the preceding February 29.

It was, indeed, by instructing their ambassador to take this step that the Russian Government replied to our reserve.

M. Iswolsky was thus called upon to make to the French Government, in his capacity as Russian Ambassador in

(1) Siebert, p. 138.

Paris, a communication that could but have a vital bearing upon the success or otherwise of the policy initiated by himself, three years previously, and of which his successor at the Pont-aux-Chantres, M. Sazonoff, formerly Russian Ambassador at Rome, had fully measured the consequences.

What was M. Poincaré's rejoinder ?

« I did not conceal from M. Iswolsky, he telegraphed on April 1 to our Ambassador at St. Petersburg, how surprised I was at the fact that the Bulgarian Government had not seen fit to apprise me directly of the new direction imparted to their policy, the more so as I had informed them, some little time ago, that they would not be authorised to raise any loan in France so long as they had not adhered to the general programme of the Triple Entente. And the better to explain my meaning I asked him whether the obligation relating to the preservation of the *status quo* did not involve an additional obligation in case the *status quo* should be infringed.

You will doubtless agree with me that the information imparted to me by M. Iswolsky, coupled with the list of questions handed to you on February 14 by M. Sazonoff, discloses a state of affairs that calls for your utmost watchfulness » (1).

It would be most interesting to be informed of the terms in which the Czar's representative reported the above-mentioned conversation to his Government, as well as of the comments which accompanied his recital. But M. Iswolsky's correspondence, as contained in the *Black Book*, makes no mention thereof. Is it to be inferred that our reply served the interests of universal peace, while testifying to the remarkable insight displayed by the leader of our diplomacy ?

(1) *Yellow Book*, N° 13.

Here again, the *Black Book* bears out by its silence the documents of the *Yellow Book*.

When we turn to this date of April I, and check the numbers of the telegrams and dispatches sent by the Russian Ambassador, we observe several omissions. The telegrams jump from N° 49 to N° 53. Of the dispatches, N° 24 is missing.

From the month of April onwards, in proportion as the conversations recorded in the *Yellow Book* succeed one another, we almost invariably draw blank when we attempt to look up in M. Iswolsky's correspondence, as published in the *Black Book*, the reports sent by the Russian Ambassador to his Government, following upon his visits to the Quai d'Orsay.

On April 8 M. Poincaré, in his conversation with the Russian Ambassador, again referred to the Serbo-Bulgarian agreement, which he viewed with concern; more especially in relation to Austria-Hungary. For, he observed ; « it is to be feared lest such combinations, given out as intended to maintain the *status quo*, should appear to that Power as a menace to its own interests ».

« In any case, he telegraphed to M. Georges Louis, the most disquieting feature of these Balkan negotiations, to my mind, is that Russia has entered upon them and pursued them behind our backs and confronts us with the accomplished fact. If her real aim is eventually to establish an Austro-Italo-Russian understanding, such a policy is one that vitally affects the balance of power in Europe and therefore jeopardises our Alliance and the Triple Entente.

« True to the Alliance, France never engages in a diplomatic conversation without first coming to an agreement with Russia ; we are entitled to be treated with the same scrupulous consideration, and I would have you

take advantage of the first opportunity to call M. Sazonoff's attention to the fact that where such serious issues are involved, it would be impossible for us to rest content with information given after the event » (1).

Of these urgent declarations, no mention is made in the *Black Book*.

On May 13 the Russian Government, ever anxious to get France to stand in with them, instructed their Ambassador to suggest the need of exercising special watchfulness over Austria-Hungary's activities, so as to be in a position, in case of necessity, to call the attention of the Vienna Cabinet in good time to the consequences of their action (2).

Granted, replied M. Poincaré, provided the watchfulness of the French and Russian agents is likewise exerted in checking the schemes of the Balkan States, whose turbulent activities threaten to bring about, as a counter-move, an Austro-Hungarian action in the Sanjak.

M. Iswolsky's report, giving an account of this conversation was duly sent to St. Petersburg; of this we are informed by the *Yellow Book*. On May 24, it appears, M. Sazonoff advised M. G. Louis that this report would come to hand the next day, by the diplomatic valise (3).

But no trace of it is to be found in the Russian documents. Of this further proof of the impartial bearing of the French Government and of their firm language, no mention is made in the *Black Book*.

(1) *Yellow Book*, N° 26.

(2) *Yellow Book*, N° 35.

(3) *Yellow Book*, N° 38.

M. Poincaré's Visit to St. Petersburg

The above rapid sketch of the conversations pursued between Paris and St. Petersburg, from the month of January to the month of August 1912, permits us to realise the difficulties experienced by the French Government in carrying out the Alliance, and in making it as efficient as possible, by means of a watchful and persevering action, so as to impart to it a moderating character in connection with the Eastern question.

Accordingly, desirous of ascertaining the exact scope of the Balkan agreements, of the existence of which the Government had been confidentially advised more than three months before, through without being informed of the actual wording of the said agreements, the French Cabinet were unanimously of opinion that a useful purpose might very well be served by a journey to the Russian capital on the part of M. Poincaré.

The journey was accomplished about the middle of August.

German propaganda has powerfully contributed to mislead public opinion about M. Poincaré's visit to St. Petersburg, to which move it has ascribed the consecration of the Balkan League. But on this vital point we now have the testimony of the *Yellow Book*, borne out by the *Black Book*.

Not only did the Balkan League, in August 1912, fail to obtain the approval of the French Government, but the French Premier at once proclaimed its alarming character.

« ... Had a further talk with Sazonoff », notes M. Poincaré in an account written on the very day of the meeting and left in the records at the Quai d'Orsay. « He is now in possession of the text of the Serbo-Bulgarian compact, in Russian, which he read to me, translating it as he went. It only mentions the *status quo* in order to provide for its eventual infringement! Bulgaria and Serbia mutually undertake to try and synchronise their mobilisation. If either country considers itself called upon to mobilise its forces, it advises the other; if the other refuses to follow suit, recourse is had to Russian arbitration. Moreover constant reference is made, in the Compact, to the arbitration of Russia.

« I called M. Sazonoff's attention to the fact that this Compact by no means answers the description I had been given of it, that it is in effect an agreement for war and that not only does it point to the existence of secret designs on the part both of the Serbs and of the Bulgarians, but that it is also to be feared that their hopes should appear to be favoured by Russia, and the expectation of sharing in the plunder prove an incentive to their appetites » (1).

What evidence does the *Black Book* afford us on the subject?

On September 12, M. Iswolsky, on his return from Contrexéville, met M. Poincaré at a luncheon party at the Elysée. He notified his Government the selfsame day of the conversation he had after lunch with the French Premier.

« Poincaré's personal opinion is that the secret Serbo-Bulgarian Compact constitutes an unhealthy stimulant both for the Bulgarians and for the Serbs. He already told me at St. Petersburg, after taking cognizance of the

(1) *Yellow Book*, N° 57.

text of that compact, that in his view it was « an instrument of war ». To his mind, the nomination of Russia to the part of arbitrator complicates matters still further. The Bulgarians are fully persuaded that even if the Russian Government were at once to oppose their veto, in case of a war between Bulgaria and Turkey, and more particularly were Bulgaria to be defeated, they would be compelled to action, under pressure of Russian public opinion. And supposing that in consequence of a statement on the part of Russia, Bulgaria is precluded from taking advantage of the present juncture for that purpose, it will be a heavy blow to Russia's influence and prestige in Bulgaria, as well as to the idea of a policy of friendship and mutual understanding between the Balkan States under the aegis of Russia » (1).

(1) *Black Book*, p. 324.

The Applicability of the “Casus Foederis”

Down to this point, the *Black Book* never disproves the dispatches contained in our *Yellow Book*. It sometimes bears them out, as we have seen ; but mostly it keeps silent, which is all the more surprising when we come to consider that conversations between M. Poincaré and M. Iswolsky took place practically every day at the time of the Balkan crisis.

September brings us to what may be called the accusing part of the *Black Book*.

According to this work, on three distinct occasions — September 12, November 7 and November 20 — did the French Premier, Foreign Minister of the Government of the Republic, aid and abet the Russian policy in the Balkans by his rash assurances as regards the applicability of the *casus foederis*, as between France and Russia. He is thus alleged to have given M. Iswolsky an opportunity of secretly influencing French policy.

Let us take the first accusation :

« M. Poincaré, writes M. Iswolsky on September 12, stated to me that the French Government are taking into the most serious consideration the international developments that are liable to occur ; they fully realise that certain events, such as the crushing of Bulgaria by Turkey, or an attack upon Serbia by Austria-Hungary may leave Russia no option but to emerge from her passive attitude and have recourse in the first place to diplomatic, and subsequently to military action, against Turkey or Austria

as the case might be. In such an emergency, according to the statements made to us by the French Government, we may rely upon receiving from France the most loyal and energetic *diplomatic support* (1). But at this stage the French Government would not be likely to receive from Parliament or from public opinion the necessary powers to engage in any military measures whatever. *But should the conflict with Austria lead to an armed intervention on the part of Germany, the French Government agree beforehand that a casus foederis would be constituted thereby, nor would they for one moment hesitate to fulfil their resulting obligations towards Russia.* « France », M. Poincaré went on to add, « is undeniably peacefully inclined : she neither seeks nor desires war ». But a German intervention directed against Russia would instantly alter this disposition and he is convinced that in such a case, both the French Parliament and public opinion would thoroughly approve the Government's decision to support Russia in arms » (2).

The method is plain enough. All the precautions taken, all the reservations insisted upon, all the conditions set forth, are made light of as compared with the one sentence emphasised by the *Black Book*, a sentence the German *White Book* had turned to account before it, and which William II has just made use of in his pro-

(1) Italicised in the original.

(2) *Black Book*, p. 325.

An extract containing the above passage is also given in the German *White Book*, pp. 148-149. We would here call attention to the tendency exhibited by the *White Book* slightly to touch up a text so as to make it appear to bear out its own contentions.

Comparing the translation published in the *White Book* of M. Iswolsky's report of September 12, 1912, with that given in the *Black Book*, we find :

a) that the words used are « any *active* military measures what-

pagandist work entitled : « Tables of Comparative History from 1878 to the Outbreak of the War of 1914 ».

These tables are in the nature of a journal, covering the period from 1878 to 1914. Month by month and year by year are recorded therein for each Power the leading events which by reason of their concordance are held by William II to have played a decisive part in leading up to the war.

Under the heading « France », we read :

1912.

August : Poincaré at St. Petersburg. — He pledges himself to the adoption of the three years' military service.

September : Poincaré to Isvolsky : « Should the conflict between Russia and Austria lead to an armed intervention on the part of Germany, the French Government agree beforehand (von vornherein) that a *casus foederis* would thus be constituted (1).

ever » (*White Book*), instead of « any military measures whatever » (*Black Book*).

b) that the translation of the concluding portion of the first paragraph reads as follows :

White Book

... but a German intervention directed against Russia *will* instantly alter this disposition and he is convinced that in such a case both the French Parliament and public opinion *will* thoroughly approve the Government's *resolution in supporting* Russia in arms.

Black Book

... but a German intervention directed against Russia *would* instantly alter this disposition and he is convinced that in such a case both the French Parliament and public opinion *would* thoroughly approve the Government's *decision to support* Russia in arms.

(1). *Vergleichende Geschichtstabellen*, von 1878 bis zum Kriegeausbruch 1914, von Kaiser Wilhelm II, Koehler, Leipzig, 1921, pp. 49 and 51.

Let us examine these two assertions.

1) The alleged promise to M. Sazonoff, in 1912, of a return to the three years' military service.

This promise was never made and for the best of reasons. Not for one moment did it occur to the French Government in 1912, to establish the three years' service. The question was not even considered in parliamentary circles, as is shown by the fact that in the course of the debate, at the end of 1912, on the *Loi des Cadres* (Army Establishment of Officers Bill), no reference was made in the Chamber of Deputies to the introduction of the three years' service. So little, indeed, was public opinion prepared for this departure, in France, that all the German Government could rake up, at the time of the introduction of their bill in the Reichstag, was certain articles in the French papers, complaining of the poor quality of the training given to the French cavalry since the adoption of the two years' service in 1905.

Have we not, moreover, the text of the German memorandum that lies at the root of the military plans of the Empire? We refer to the famous memorandum drawn up by the German General Staff for the purpose of justifying their demands for larger effectives. It is signed by Ludendorff and is dated December 1912.

Now does this document so much as mention any eventual plan of the French Government for the adoption of the three years service? No.

Ludendorff calls attention *solely* to the general situation and to the attitude of Italy. Speaking of France he merely notes the importance of the military sacrifices accepted by the French nation having regard to their low birthrate « France, he writes, exacts military service

from her population to a far greater extent than we do » (1)

The German propaganda, moreover, has drawn freely upon the documents taken from the Russian Record Office, and neither those given in the Black Book, nor those included in M. von Siebert's work, contain even the slightest reference to a forthcoming increase of the French military forces in 1912. Clearly, had a promise been made, an obligation undertaken at St. Petersburg, in August 1912, M. Iswolsky would have been informed of it and instructed to follow the matter up.

The facts of the case are entirely different.

In the month of November 1912, the German Imperial Government decided upon the adoption of important military measures (2). A numerical increase of 160.000 men was to be effected, thus raising the establishment of the German army to 863.000 men, as against 480.000 men in the French army, after deducting from the latter its Algerian and Moroccan troops.

The general lines of this scheme were divulged by the German Press in January 1913. A bill was laid before the Reichstag three months later, while the extraordinary levy of one milliard marks was put through in May.

By reason of its new military organisation the German Empire was about to have on its western frontier, between the Rhine and the Vosges, more than 200.000 men, organised on a war footing and ready, at the first call, to deliver a lightning attack.

Was it possible for France, who had but 100.000 covering troops to oppose to this force, to live in such a state of insecurity ?

(1) Documents relating to the activities of the German G. H. A. in 1916-1918, by E. Ludendorff p. 57.

(2) V. M. Bethman Hollweg's speech in the Reichstag, April 10 1913.

To these German measures the French newspapers replied by a Press campaign, set afoot in the second half of February (1). A bill was laid before the Chamber, the object of which was to amend the law of March 21, 1905 and to extend the term of military service to three years. Not till several months later, in June and July 1913, i. e. long after the Reichstag had voted both the military and the financial measures referred to above, was this bill discussed and passed.

The three years'law was therefore a countermove as was invariably pointed out in their speeches by all its supporters in the French Chamber. The three years'law was a consequence of the German military measures.

Nor were the demonstrations of German chauvinism to which the January commemoration of 1813 gave rise without affecting the decision of the French Parliament. And if the passing of this law struck European public opinion, at the time it was because France, in consequence of her low birthrate, was obliged, for the purpose of countering such formidable military measures, to pass a law extending the term of military service, whereas Germany, by reason of her more numerous population, had but to draw upon her ample store of temporarily or definitely exempted men, without modifying her recruiting law.

In point of fact France only sought to restore the disturbed balance by such means as her low birthrate compelled her to adopt. This the Social Democrat member Haase had clearly perceived when, addressing the Chancellor, he declared in the Reichstag, April, 7, 1913 « Your policy will oblige France to establish the three years'service ».

The promise alleged to have been made by M. Poincaré

(1) *Le Temps*, February 17.

to M. Sazonoff in the month of August 1912 is so utterly a variance with likelihood that it would require, in order to gain credit, to be backed up by reliable evidence.

Now all that William II can point to are two articles taken from French publications, and which he has not read himself, but merely quotes from M. Morel's book (1).

The first of these documents is an article from the *Humanité* of which M. Morel does not even give the date ; the second is an article published in the « *Courrier Européen* » of June 13, 1914, i.e. two years after the events with which we are dealing.

As we observed above, besides the fact that it is not recorded in the correspondence between MM. Sazonoff and Iswolsky, the alleged promise has not even an appearance of likelihood.

What, indeed, was the origin of Ludendorff's report in December 1912 ?

It was undoubtedly the change in the general situation brought about by the Balkan War. Now that war broke out two months after M. Poincaré's visit to St. Petersburg.

As was observed by M. de Lanessan in the preface to the book he published in 1913 concerning the question of the French military forces.

« The tremendous increase in his army, that the Emperor William thought it necessary to effect for the protection of his realm, *following upon the Balkan events*, compelled France immediately to expand her own military forces, and provided the firebrands on both sides of the frontier with a pretext for troubling the conscience of the public and disquieting the vested interests » (2).

(1) Truth and the War, p. 160.

(2) F. de Lanessan. *Nos forces militaires*, p. 11.

It appeared all the more necessary to criticise the documents on which the assertion of William II was based, in that General von Kuhl, in his book « Das Deutsche Generalstab in Vorbereitung und Durchführung des Weltkrieges » published at Berlin, in 1920, likewise made capital, in his discussion, of M. Poincaré's alleged promise in 1912 to M. Sazonoff.

2) Assurances given to M. Iswolsky as regards the coming into play of the *casus foederis*.

There exists on this point, in the Russian Record Office, an account written by M. Sazonoff in August, following upon his conversations with the French Prime Ministers, a very complete document and the counterpart of that drawn up by M. Poincaré himself, after the interview. This document will enable us in this case also to proceed to a critical survey concerning this second assertion of William II.

M. Sazonoff's account is published by Mr von Siebert and is in substance as follows :

Imperatoria brevisitas. — But is not this imperial conciseness obtained at the expense of truth ?

The two Prime Ministers congratulated one another upon the conclusion of the naval agreement initialed in Paris, July 16, by Admiral Aubert and Prince Lieven ; as regards carrying it into effect, they agreed to follow the same procedure as that adopted in the case of the military agreement concluded twenty years ago.

With reference to the relations between France and Italy, Mr Sazonoff expressed the opinion that it was highly important for France that Italy should conform strictly to the terms of her compact with her allies ; she should be given no occasion, however, to unite herself more closely to them. M. Poincaré ventured to hope his efforts would not remain fruitless, but that he should succeed

in establishing on a sound basis the neighbourly relations obtaining between France and Italy.

As regards the war between Italy and Turkey, Mr Poincaré urged that a certain reserve on the part of France was to be accounted for in the first place by the necessity of taking into consideration the feelings of the Moslem population in the French possessions, and in the second place by the fact that neither Germany nor Austria had brought any pressure to bear upon Constantinople.

Finally the conversation veered round to the situation in the Balkans and the need for a common plan of diplomatic action, in order to prevent matters going from bad to worse.

« *Thereupon, states Mr Sazonoff in as many words, Poincaré considered it necessary to emphasize the fact that French public opinion would not tolerate an appeal to arms over purely Balkan affairs, so long as Germany took no part in them and did not herself bring about the casus foederis, in which case, of course, Russia might rely upon the obligations undertaken towards us by France being carried out to the full by her.* »

Whereupon Mr Sazonoff made a point of stating that Russia would likewise have to consider her own public opinion, in case of a conflict brought about by extra-European colonial issues, so long as the vital interests of France were not injured thereby, in Europe.

M. von Siebert, whose work comprises the whole of the Russian diplomatic correspondence from 1909 to 1914, did not fail to insert this document. Why did not the *Black Book*, which deals solely with Franco-Russian relations, show the same impartiality ? Does not this point to collusion between the *Black Book* and the German *White Book*, from which William II has borrowed this argument for purposes of propaganda.

Let Mr Sazonoff's account, put on record immediately after the conversations at Peterhof, « France to come into the war if Germany herself brought about the *casus foederis* », be compared with M. Iswolsky's reading, set down on his return from a luncheon party at the Elysée :

« The French Government agree beforehand that a *casus foederis* would thus be constituted ».

It is easy to guess which would meet with the approval of the *White Book* and of William II.

M. Iswolsky's Personal Action

Here should be recorded as conducive to a proper estimate of the character of the Russian Ambassador in Paris, certain data supplied to us by the *Black Book*.

This publication affords us, indeed, a very remarkable document, written on October 23, at the very time the Balkan League went to war, and starting as follows :

« As I ponder, day and night (1), upon the various developments that may occur, I am necessarily confronted with the three following possibilities : a decisive victory by the Balkan States : a similar victory by Turkey ; long-drawn-out military operations, and as a consequence of these, rioting and the slaughter of Christians in Constantinople, or in other parts of the Turkish Empire.

« In point of fact, the first of these contingencies strikes me as being the least likely to occur, as well as the most replete with seeds of baleful consequences for the peace of the world ; it would instantly have raised into full historical significance the problem of the Slavonic struggle, not only against Islamism, but against Germanism. In that case, it is to be doubted whether any palliative measures whatever would prove effective and *it would be necessary to prepare for a great general and decisive European war* (2).

(1) *Poor fellow !* (Marginal note in M. von Hartwig's handwriting. The document is taken from the records of the Russian minister at Belgrade, von Hartwig). (*Black Book*, p. 333).

(2) *Black Book*, p. 333.

A week later that decisive victory of the Balkan States had been won.

As we read the *Black Book*, we are made to realise to what an extent the mental outlook of the Czar's Ambassador was affected by the part he had played at St. Petersburg, before taking up his post at the Rue de Grenelle. We find him dictating to M. Sazonoff from Paris, in connection with the Tripolitan question, the line of conduct to be followed towards Italy, nor do all the amenities of diplomatic etiquette suffice to dissemble the imperative character of the advice tendered.

What had best be done to prepare for that great general and decisive European war foreseen as the inevitable consequence of the victory of the Balkan States ?

Of course, M. Sazonoff had merely to turn up the report written by himself in August, after his conversation with M. Poincaré, in order to realise the exact significance of the obligations undertaken by France with reference to the Balkan question. But might not the Czar's Ambassador in Paris and late Russian Foreign Minister, by skilful touches imperceptibly applied, impart to a chief whose fortunes he had built up the impression that a change had gradually taken place in the intentions of the French Premier ?

In a letter dated September 26, 1911, M. Iswolsky expounds the view he takes of his duties as Russian envoy in Paris.

« It is likewise my intention », he writes, « to keep closely in touch with the representatives of the Balkan States here. The Bulgarian Minister. M. Stanciof, Czar Ferdinand's trusted agent, is always very well informed as to the latter's political designs. The Serbian Minister. M. Vesnitch, is one of the most able and influential Serbian statesmen. I am on the best of terms with both

these diplomatists, whom it will be possible to utilise, on occasion, for our own ends. »

The fact, moreover, of the presence in Paris of another late Foreign Minister, M. Tittoni, the Italian Ambassador, with whom he had signed the Racconigi agreements two years previously, gave him an opportunity of pursuing a policy of his own, apart from that of M. Sazonoff.

« The state of affairs that is taking shape », he writes on the same date, just when the Tripolitan question was coming to the front, « appears to me to call for a decisive policy on our part, were it only with a view to settling the two questions of the railways of Asia Minor and of the Turco-Persian frontier. I take the liberty, moreover, of expressing the opinion that it would be as well, in any case, to obtain from Italy a declaration to the effect that, realising, as she is now doing, her claims to Tripoli under her agreement with us, she still considers herself bound to us, for the future, as regards the question of the Straits. M. Tittoni has promised to keep me informed as to the present issue, and I shall pursue my conversations with him ; so if you should wish to have any communication transmitted to Rome indirectly, I might serve as a very useful channel for the purpose » (1).

It may further be stated, in order to complete the mental description of the Czar's Ambassador in Paris, that he was obsessed throughout his political career by the nightmare of a Franco-Austrian alliance.

« You are aware, he writes to M. Sazonoff on June 20, 1912, of the existence, in Paris, of age-long sympathies towards Austria-Hungary, and also of the prevalence here of the opinion — a completely mistaken one, to my mind — that it would be feasible to make that Power

(1) *Black Book*, p. 137.

serve as a counterweight to Germany. Now, should the conviction take root that we are leaning over too far towards Germany, Poincaré might likewise harbour the idea of a rapprochement with Austria-Hungary, which would lead to unutterable confusion in the international situation. Call to mind the part the played in 1908 by French sympathies towards the Vienna Cabinet. Do not forget that ever since the Potsdam meeting (1), you have been credited with a special infatuation for Germany. You yourself have observed the atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion created about your person by the efforts of Georges Louis and Bompard. I do the very best I can to dispel that atmosphere, but in this I am not always succesful » (2).

(1) November 4, 1910.

(2) *Black Book*, pp. 281, 282.

The Initiative of the Austro-Hungarian Government and the Slavonic Interests

Now on August 14, 1912, Count Berchtold took the initiative of approaching the Great Powers with a view to :

(1) Urging on the Porte the adoption of a policy of progressive decentralisation, of a nature to provide the Balkan peoples with the safeguards to which they could justifiably lay claim ;

(2) Acting upon the Balkan States, to get them to await in peace the results of this policy.

On August 22, the French Government replied to the Austrian note in very studied terms :

« In so far as the Turkish Government might be prepared, of their own accord, to grant certain advantages to the Albanians, the French Government would willingly advise them to make corresponding or similar concessions to the Serbs, Bulgarians and Greeks, but France could not take the responsibility of herself bringing about an alteration of the *status quo* in the Balkans (1). »

Could any one have carried the scruple of impartiality farther than that ?

The *Black Book*, presumably, is not of that opinion, for it fails to record this reply, of which M. Iswolsky certainly did not omit to inform his Government.

The Russian Government, on the other hand, at once

(1) *Yellow Book*, N° 64.

rejected the proposal relating to the action to be taken in connection with the Balkan States. Calling attention, moreover, to the dangers of the situation : the concentration of Montenegrine forces on the Turkish frontier, and the growing unrest in Bulgaria, they urged the adoption of certain measures « of a nature to afford both the Balkan States and the Christian populations of the peninsula the hope of a betterment in their lot ».

They then proceeded to oppose to the Austrian proposal a counter-proposal aiming at guaranteeing for the Christian populations :

1. Their personal security and that of their belongings.
2. Their equality before the law.
3. Their participation in the local administration, according to the ethnical composition of the inhabitants.

What was M. Poincaré's reply ?

Yes, provided the British Government likewise consented, and if there was a prospect of persuading the Cabinets of Vienna and Berlin to adhere to this work of reform (1).

Was this reply found embarrassing by the author of the *Black Book*, in that it destroys the legend of the division of Europe into two groups and of an irreducible hostility alleged to have been kept up between those two groups by the French diplomacy ?

Be this as it may, the fact remains that no mention is made of it in that publication.

For the period extending from the end of September to the first few days in October, the *Black Book* contains many omissions. In this case, however, they are to be accounted for by the circumstances. M. Sazonoff had, indeed, come from St. Petersburg to confer with the Cabinets of London, Paris and Berlin. The negotiations were

(1) *Yellow Book*, N° 98.

centered in himself ; he conversed personally with his Ambassadors.

The *Yellow Book* gives us an account of the multifarious efforts by which our diplomacy strove to avert, even at the eleventh hour, the outbreak of the Balkan War.

Why not notify the Balkan States that they must not hope for any territorial aggrandisement as the result of eventual victory ? (1).

Again why not entrust to Russia and Austria-Hungary, in case of a conflict, a sort of European mandate, empowering them to take action with reference to the Balkan States, which would be the best means of providing against any Austrian interference ? (2)

But these moves initiated by our diplomacy, whether in the nature of definitive proposals, as in the first case, or of mere suggestions, as in the second, were thwarted by the events.

On September 25, Turkey mobilised ten divisions in Rumelia ; on September 30, the decrees of mobilisation were published at Sofia and at Belgrade ; on October 1, at Athens.

On October 3, M. Sazonoff arrived in Paris. The same day, M. Poincaré sent off the following telegram to the French Ambassadors at Berlin and in London :

« I have just conferred with M. Sazonoff. Russia would be prepared, either together with Austria, in the name of Europe, or in conjunction with the rest of the Powers, to approach the Balkan States and inform them that they could not permit a breach of the peace, that they are determined to localise the conflict, if it should break out, and

(1) *Yellow Book*, N° 101.

(2) *Yellow Book*, N° 119.

to allow the States that have proceeded to mobilise their forces no hope of territorial aggrandisement » (1).

But it would be necessary, of course, for the Great Powers to be prepared to forward the carrying out of the reforms, in the interest of the Balkan populations. The same day, our Ambassador in London accordingly received the following instructions :

« It does not yet appear impossible to prevent the outbreak of war in the Balkans, provided the three Powers agree to immediate and collective action or to an Austro-Hungarian move on behalf of Europe. As I pointed out last night in my telegram, M. Sazonoff is prepared to accept either of these alternatives. But I rather think he is right in considering that the only chance of calming down the Balkan States would be to impress upon them that Europe will herself attend to the carrying out of the reforms. That was my reason for including N° 4 in my draft of September 22. I would request you to approach the English Government once more on the subject. In any case, France is prepared either at once to take the initiative of joint action, or to adhere to any such initiative (2).

It might have been possible, at that juncture, to preserve peace, had the British Government shared our views. But the London Cabinet believed war to be unavoidable and that the only thing to be attempted was to localise it, by accepting the suggestion of the French Government to induce Austria-Hungary and Russia to take joint action.

On the other hand, the Berlin and Vienna Cabinets were convinced that the Turks would win.

There appears to be no object in our giving a detailed

(1) *Yellow Book*, N° 132.

(2) *Yellow Book*, N° 133.

account of the efforts put forth by our diplomacy, from October 11, with a view to prevent the outbreak of hostilities. Our task is to compare the *Black Book* with the *Yellow Book*, and only when we get to October 11 do we find in the former a further mention of our efforts.

Montenegro had declared war against Turkey on October 8.

Was it, or was it not, still possible to prevent Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece from going to war ?

It might be done, thought M. Poincaré, if the Balkan States were afforded the guarantee that the question of reforms would be dealt with by an International Conference.

On October 11, we took the initiative of enquiring of the Cabinets of London and St. Petersburg whether they would agree to the plan of a Conference of the Great Powers.

England at once signified her approval. « Sir Edward Grey », wrote M. P. Cambon to M. Poincaré, on October 12, agrees with you as to the necessity of preserving the solidarity of Europe and he adheres to your views » (1).

Russia, on the other hand, convinced as she was that war would break out at once, was of opinion that it was better to leave the matter to the arbitrament of the sword, and forwarded to M. Poincaré, through her Ambassador in Paris, a note raising the question of an eventual intervention of the Great Powers, « but only after the first decisive moves of the adverse parties ».

Our diplomacy at once altered its formula to meet this requirement, and communicated it to the Cabinets of Berlin and Vienna. Though the date of its meeting was put off for the time being, the idea of a Conference still prevailed, which was sufficient to maintain the solidarity of the Powers (2).

(1) *Yellow Book*, N° 179.

(2) *Yellow Book*, N° 193 and 194.

On this point we have the evidence of the *Black Book*, which entirely bears out the peaceful intentions of the French Prime Minister.

« Poincaré », telegraphed M. Iswolsky on October 12, « declared that he unreservedly approved your proposal to examine without further delay the question of an intervention of the Powers with a view to putting an end to the war if it should break out. He himself had already decided to propose to the Powers immediately after the beginning of hostilities and after previously coming to an understanding with Russia and England, that they should offer their joint mediation at the most favourable moment. Personally, he is fully prepared to accept that this intervention on the part of the Powers shall be more than a mere mediation and to consider the possibility of a joint armed demonstration of the Powers ; but to this he rather expects England and Germany to object. Nevertheless he is quite disposed actively to pursue the work he has put his hand to of uniting the European Powers, in order to avert the far more disastrous consequences that might ensue from the present crisis » (1).

The *Black Book* thus affords the Prime Minister the most valuable evidence as to his intentions at the time when the idea of a Conference was first mooted.

Meanwhile, the thought of the secret agreements concluded between the Balkan States remained ever present in the mind of the leader of the French Government. « That is an agreement for war », he had observed to M. Sazonoff in August. Nor does he deem it possible, considering the stage of extreme tension entered upon by the Balkan question, to keep silent any longer about those agreements.

On October 15, he wrote to our Ambassador in London.

(1) *Black Book*, p. 320.

After explaining the circumstances in which, on March 18, April 10 and May 11, he had received applications from the Bulgarian Government for permission to float a Bulgarian Loan in France ; after referring to the information the Director of Political Affairs had been authorised to forward, in a highly confidential way, to our Embassy in London, as regards the purport of the Compact signed between Bulgaria and Serbia, M. Poincaré goes on to say :

« I am not willing to take upon myself the responsibility of leaving England any longer in ignorance of a situation whereby we may be compelled, any day, to combine our efforts still more closely in order to prevent the conflict in the Balkans from becoming general.

« I would therefore request you secretly to impart to Sir Edward Grey the general information I am giving you herein, as to the purpose and scope of the Serbo-Bulgarian Compact.

« While mentioning my fears to him, call his attention to the fact that I have no doubt as to the sincerity of the peaceful intention of the Russian Government. MM. Sazonoff and Iswolsky evidently did not believe that the immediate effect of the rapprochement between the Bulgarians and the Serbs would be to precipitate the concerted mobilisation provided for in the Compact. They fancied that Russian arbitration would be able to work for peace until the day came when Russia made up her mind that war was expedient, and in all good faith they supposed that day to be distant » (1).

As we all know, the outcome of the war was decided, as early as October 15, by the Bulgarian victory.

(1) *Yellow Book*, p. 184.

Localisation of the Balkan War

Though it had not been possible to avert the outbreak of hostilities in the Balkans, was there at least a chance of localising the war, of preventing a general conflagration ?

Such was now the task to which our diplomacy applied itself. But a first snare was spread for it as soon as it strove to preserve the peace of Europe.

The suddenness of the Turkish defeat had taken the cabinets of Vienna and Berlin by surprise. They could hardly have expected to see the Serbs, pouring down through Albania to the shores of the Adriatic, join hands with the Bulgarians under the walls of Adrianople. Berlin foresaw the danger ; chaos in Turkey, and the end of the pan-German dreams. Herr von Kiderlen-Waechter approached our Ambassador, M. Jules Cambon, on the subject, the very day when the news of the Bulgarian victory came to hand.

« Why should not France, England and Germany, who for special reasons are each equally interested in preventing the downfall of Turkey, see what satisfaction it might be advisable to give to the Balkan States, while respecting the principle of the integrity of the Turkish Empire ? London and Paris might confer together on the subject, while Berlin might consult with Vienna » (1).

« This suggestion tends to isolate Russia », replied

(1) *Yellow Book*, N° 200.

M. Poincaré, who informed our Ambassador at St. Petersburg of the proposal, and spoke of it to M. Iswolsky.

The latter gave the following account of this conversation two weeks later, in a private letter to M. Sazanoff, published in the *Black Book* :

« In spite of Kiderlen's present efforts to put the whole business in a light unoffending to ourselves, and his complaints about the alleged misleading interpretation given to his proposal, the original text of M. Jules Cambon's letter, which has been forwarded to you, leaves not the slightest doubt as to the real object of the said proposal. The scheme was, after agreeing with France and England upon some other programme for solving the Balkan problem and having it adopted by Vienna, to submit that programme to us, cut and dried, and in such circumstances as to leave us no option but to accept it bodily or to remain isolated. This crafty scheme failed solely on account of the perfect loyalty of M. Poincaré, who turned it down without the slightest hesitation (1). »

But while strictly discharging their duty as a loyal and faithful ally, the French Government did not lose sight of the general principles, of their traditional policy towards the ambitions of the Slavs. Kirk-Kilisse, Koumanovo, Monastir, what hopes might not the Czar's Government entertain now ?

Localising the war meant not only preventing Austria-Hungary, who had mobilised her army corps in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and concentrated more than 100.000 men at Serajevo and Gravosa, from taking military action against Serbia, it meant not only opposing successfully

(1) *Black Book*, p. 341. — It is to be noted as characterising the good faith of the Russian publications that the first part of the above letter dated November 7 1912, has been omitted by M. von Siebert (V. p. 575).

any territorial conquest, on the part of Austria, in the Sanjak or in Albania ; but it likewise meant preventing any attempt on the part of Russia to raise the question of the Straits and Constantinople.

It was in these particularly difficult circumstances that the French Government took the initiative of suggesting a joint self-denying ordinance. Previously, indeed, on October 30, M. Poincaré had proposed to the German Austro-Hungarian and Italian Governments, in agreement with Russia and England, to strive jointly after the preservation of the peace of Europe « in a spirit of complete self-denial » (1).

On November 4, M. Poincaré put the question on a more definite basis by enquiring of the Czar's Government « whether they were, like France, resolutely opposed to the annexation of any part of the Turkish territory *by a Great Power*, and whether they would be prepared to consider together with France, and also with England the best means of averting that danger. »

The French Government were well aware that the throwing open of the Straits was provided for in the agreements signed by Russia and Italy at Racconigi, in October 1909. But what was the scope of those agreements ? Had Italy undertaken any obligations towards Russia, in the event of a crisis in the Balkans, of a nature to bring about an intervention by the Great Powers ?

No later than November 9, M. Poincaré broached the matter squarely with M. Iswolski, who reported their interview as follows to his Government :

« M. Poincaré asked me what attitude Italy would take up in the event of an Austro-Serbian conflict, and also wanted to know whether I was fully acquainted with the

(1) *Yellow Book*, No 210.

nature and scope of our agreement with Italy. I answered that I could only tell him in a general way it had been agreed at Racconigi, that both Russia and Italy would oppose any aggrandisement, in the Balkans, on the part of a third Power (einer dritten Macht), but that diplomatic action had alone been contemplated and that no active intervention had been provided for. I observed, moreover, that neither were we acquainted with the exact wording of the agreement entered into by France and Italy.

« M. Poincaré at once said to me that the time had come for us, as Allies, to compare notes as to our respective relations with Italy. Italy was called upon to play an important part at the present juncture, and this was the first question to be elucidated. He added that if you were of the same opinion, it might be possible to approach Italy about this matter and enquire of her what were her views on the subject » (1).

The *Black Book* shows us how keenly Russia had taken to heart this question of the throwing open of the Straits, and how anxious she was to secure the advantages accruing to her under Art. 5 of the Racconigi agreement, which article runs as follows :

« Italy and Russia pledge themselves to take a sympathetic view, the former of the Russian interests in the matter of the Straits, the latter of the Italian interests in Tripoli and Cyrenaica. »

The peace treaty signed at Lausanne in October, had just assigned to Italy her share under the Racconigi agreement. Was it possible to deprive Russia of the corresponding advantages accruing to her under that agreement, especially on the morrow of the victory gained by the Balkan States ?

(1) Siebert, p. 481.

It will be seen how seriously the initiative taken by the French Government, while serving the real interests of peace, threatened to injure her alliance with Russia. With reference to the suggestion of November 4, tending to proclude the annexation of any part of the Turkish territory by a Great Power, the Russian Government had expressed the opinion on the 9th that it was desirable in the reply to be sent to M. Poincaré, « to avoid such positive declarations » as that suggested in the French Minister's letter, and « definitely opposing the annexation of any part of the Turkish territory by a Great Power » ; this formula being liable to be applied to Russia, in the matter of the Straits.

The Accusation Levelled at the French Policy

It was necessary to define as clearly as possible the extremely difficult character of the political situation during the first week in November, for it is under the date of November 7 that we come to the second accusation brought by the Black Book against M. Poincaré's aggressive policy.

It is couched in the following words :

« Whereas, up to the present, France had declared to us that local and so to speak purely Balkan developments could only lead on her part to diplomatic action and by no means to active intervention, she would now seem to have arrived at the conclusion that any conquest of territory on the part of Austria would imperil the general balance of power in Europe, and consequently France's own interests (1). »

On this point, a document contained in the *Yellow Book* clearly defines the position of the French Government at this stage of the negotiations bearing upon the eventual assistance Russia might expect to receive from France, in case of an Austrian intervention.

On November 13, after pointing out to M. G. Louis that he was prepared, in agreement with the British Government, to support the advice already tendered at Belgrade

(1) *Black Book*, p. 342.

by the Imperial Government, M. Poincaré thus defined the attitude of his own Government (1).

« As regards the attitude the French Government would take up, should it not be found possible to prevent an active intervention of Austria, directed against Serbia, it will not be possible for me to define it before I am informed of the attitude the Russian Government would see fit to adopt. Kindly request M. Sazonoff, therefore, to let me know to what practical measures he would consider himself called upon to resort in reply to any threatening or coercive action on the part of the Vienna Cabinet. »

The better to understand these divergencies, it is necessary to recall what has been stated above concerning the gloomy prognostications of the Russian Ambassador in Paris as to what would happen in case the fortunes of war should bring about a complete victory of the Balkan States. It will be remembered that in this assumption he predicted « a general and decisive European war ».

Was he not endeavouring, in the expectation of this event, to bind down France to a definite course of action ? Russian prestige had received a severe blow in the Balkans, as the result of the Austrian veto on the granting to Serbia of an outlet on the Adriatic. To serve the interests of peace the French Prime Minister, while thwarting the territorial ambitions of Russia had urged the Austro-Hungarian Government to abstain from any irretrievable move in their quarrel with the Serbian Government.

For instance, he had called Count Szecezen's attention to the fact that, in the event of an invasion of the Serbian territory », a situation resulting from military operations would in no case be held to be final, either on the shores

(1) *Yellow Book*, No 257.

of the Adriatic, or at Constantinople, and that the Powers would clearly be entitled to intervene for the purpose of safeguarding their own interests at the conclusion of peace.

Could it be that M. Iswolsky considered the opportunity a favourable one for enforcing his views upon M. Sazonoff ?

We shall find, moreover, that the information supplied to his Government by M. Iswolsky a few days later was governed by the same bias.

On November 17, he telegraphed as follows (1).

« In the course of a conversation about the French reply to my communications on the subject of the Austro-Serbian issue, M. Poincaré informed me that it was impossible for him, even unofficially, before the Imperial Government had apprised him of their own intention, to define what line of conduct France would adopt in the event of an active intervention on the part of Austria.

« It is for Russia, he observed, to lead the way in a question in which she is the chiefly interested party : France's part is to lend her the most active support ; were they to assume the initiative, the French Government would run the risk either of stopping short of the intentions of their Ally, or of exceeding them. It was precisely in order that no possible doubt should remain as regards the measure of our assistance that I have thought it incumbent on me to call attention to a passage in M. Sazonoff's instructions to the Russian Minister at Belgrade, in which it was stated that France and England had openly declared that they were by no means prepared to allow the conflict with the Triple Alliance to fester. In short, added M. Poincaré, it all comes to this, that if Russia

(1) *Black Book*, p. 346 ; *White Book*, pp. 149-150.

goes to war, France will do the same, because we know that in this matter, behind Austria there will be Germany. »

The next day, November 18, M. Iswolsky submitted this telegram to M. Poincaré, who at once telegraphed as follows to our ambassador at St. Petersburg :

« M. Iswolsky read to me yesterday the telegram he had sent to St. Petersburg together with the letter I had written to him (1). In order to define the French attitude clearly, he stated that France would go to war, if Russia herself did so, because we knew that Germany was behind Austria. I remarked that the statement was too sweeping and that all I had said was that France would respect the treaty of alliance and would even extend to Russia her military support, in the event of the *casus foederis* coming into play. M. Iswolsky promised me that he would amend and define (his statement). I would request you, when the occasion offers, to define our attitude in strict conformity with the treaty (2).

The very same day, as we are informed by the *Black Book*, M. Iswolsky amended his previous telegram :

« To avoid any possible misunderstanding and in view of the importance of the matter, I thought it better to read to M. Poincaré my telegram N° 369, to the text of which he gave his unqualified approval. He merely requested me to define more clearly the conditions under which France would go to war.

« It is quite understood that France would come in, he said to me, in the clearly defined event of the occurrence of the *casus foederis* provided for in the Alliance, that is to say, should Germany afford Austria her military support against Russia (3).

(1) November 4, 1912 (V. *Yellow Book*, N° 226).

(2) *Yellow Book* N° 263.

(3) *Black Book*, p. 346 ; *White Book*, p. 150.

We thus have M. Iswolsky amended by himself.

Do not these explanatory amendments constitute a crushing reply to the campaign waged by the German propaganda against the policy followed by the leader of the French Government in the autumn of 1912 ?

When all is said and done, throughout the protracted negotiations, the effect of which was to circumscribe the Balkan conflagration, the reproach brought against M. Poincaré is that he declared that after being in existence for more than twenty years the Franco-Russian Alliance had lost none of its strength. Would it have been possible to bring pressure to bear upon their ally, as did the French Government, to force upon her a self-denying ordinance after the Racconigi agreement, to make her accept the denial of an outlet on the Adriatic for Serbia, and at the same time to declare to her that France repudiated all her obligations ? Who is there but understands that the French Government would have had no authority over their ally, unless they could point to the danger with which a pro-Slavonic policy threatened France by the coming into play of the *casus foederis* !

We now come to the third accusation.

M. Poincaré is indicted on the score of a declaration made by him to M. Tittoni, again about the applicability of the *casus foederis*, on November 20, 1912 :

« During the conversation, telegraphs M. Iswolsky, M. Poincaré told Tittoni that if the Austro-Serbian conflict should lead to a general war, Russia could rely implicitly upon the armed support of France ; according to Poincaré, this declaration visibly impressed Tittoni » (1).

This document has been worked for all it was worth

(1) *Black Book*, p. 347 ; *White Book*, p. 151.

by the authors of the German propaganda. They go back to the date mentioned (November 20, 1912); they observe that peace between Italy and Turkey had been signed a month previously; they bethink themselves of the Franco-Italian agreement of 1902 and they ask, considering the Western Chancelleries have not yet delivered up their secrets, whether this declaration was not untimely, or at least pitched in too high a key; memories of the Franco-Italian comradeship-in-arms tend still further to enhance this impression.

It would appear, on the contrary, that we ought to be grateful to M. Poincaré for displaying deep insight and a real spirit of decision during those critical days at the end of November, when the question of a Serbian harbour might have brought into conflict the two great political groups in Europe.

How can a proper estimate of this declaration be arrived at, if it is separated from the circumstances in which it was made?

There can be no question here of unravelling the historical truth, as long as we have nothing to guide us in judging these events, except Russian documents which, moreover, afford us different accounts. (The concluding paragraph of M. Iswolsky's dispatch of November 20 — *Black Book*, p. 347 — is missing in M. von Siebert's compilation).

But as the enemy propaganda, working upon the Russian documents, bases a third accusation on a single sentence, which it emphasizes by the use of capitals, at though it were indeed a capital sentence on M. Poincaré, we may well be allowed to reconstitute, in the light of the said documents, the political circumstances that surrounded this declaration.

Now what do these Russian documents reveal to us,

whether we take them from the *Black Book* or from M. von Siebert's work ?

The deep concern of the French Government at the mystery made of the agreements signed at Racconigi, their anxiety to discern the truth in a question that threatened to disturb the balance of power, at the very moment when the Albanian problem looked as if it might bring about a general conflagration.

We quoted above M. Poincaré's pressing request to M. Iswolsky for information as to the wording of the above-mentioned agreements. By reason of the exceptionally secret nature of those agreements, M. Sazonoff was reluctant to divulge the fact that he had pledged his word to M. Tittoni not only never to publish them but actually to keep them carefully hidden away, in the Russian Record Office, even from the eyes of the allies of the Czar's Government.

On November 20, M. Iswolsky returned to the charge with his Government : « I venture to ask you once more, with the utmost insistence, whether you can see no way out of a situation in which, in spite of the possibility, in the near future, of a general European conflict, we are playing hide-and seek, as it were, with our Ally » (1).

Now if the Russian document is to be believed, on the very day when this dispatch was sent off, M. Poincaré received M. Tittoni and the following dialogue took place :

— Will Italy eventually support Austria, if Russia supports Serbia in the matter of a Serbian approach to the Adriatic.

M. Tittoni. — In the event of war being waged over this issue, Italy would be compelled to afford armed support to Austria.

(1) *Black Book*, p. 350.

— But, surely, this does not tally with what I know of the Racconigi agreements, and it is quite contrary to the Franco-Italian compact of 1902, is it not ?

M. Tittoni. — Italy's agreement with Austria as regards Albania was previous to her agreement with France and Russia.

And now came the déclaration concerning the *casus foederis*, for which M. Poincaré is indicted, while it is carefully omitted to add the sentence with which M. Iswolsky ends the dispatch reporting the above dialogue :

« In view of the importance of M. Tittoni's statements, M. Poincaré wishes you to let him know through my intermediary whether it is true that you have altered your viewpoint, and whether you now consider it necessary to insist upon a territorial approach to the Adriatic for Serbia ? (1) »

The last paragraph of this dispatch puts such an utterly different complexion upon the allegedly warlike statements of the leader of the French Government that M. von Siebert has thought fit to omit it from his compilation.

Furthermore, on November 23, M. Iswolsky wrote :

« M. Poincaré particularly urged me to consider how important it is at the present critical juncture, that Serbia shall not be able to plead that she is acting on advice received from Russia : it must be made perfectly clear to all that if Serbia persists in marching on Durazzo, she will be doing so at her own risk and peril. Poincaré requested me to convey to you the above » (2).

Now is it to be supposed that the Russian Government would have consented to listen to these counsels of mode-

(1) *Black Book*, p. 348.

(2) *Black Book*. p. 353.

ration, had they not perceived, on the other hand, how resolutely France had stood by them at this almost tragical juncture ?

The next day but one, a temporary joint Austro-Italian occupation of Albania was suggested. This meant the momentary quelling of the conflict in the Balkans, which was now to be dealt with by the Great Powers at the London Conference.

With the month of December 1912, the first volume of the *Black Book*, the only one that has hitherto appeared, comes to an end.

In connection with the part played by France in the Balkan crisis, we have reviewed the dispatches and telegrams it contains, and we have found that down to the summer of 1912, this compilation of close upon 400 pages, dealing with M. Iswolsky's diplomatic activities, contains no document disproving the data of the *Yellow Book* concerning the negotiations of the French Government with the Allied Governments.

It may be surmised, in view of the political bias displayed in the making up of this work, that M. Iswolsky's dispatches would not have been burked as they were, had they not borne eloquent testimony to the pacific policy of France.

Following upon M. Poincaré's journey to St. Petersburg we are given three documents — three bills of indictment, they might be called — got up regardless of typographical expense ; but in practically every case we find the same deliberate practice of ignoring the repeated, the almost daily efforts of the leader of the French Government, in the first place to preserve the peace, and subsequently to provide against any extension of the conflagration in the Balkans.

As regards the three counts of the indictment in support

of which all these papers would appear to have been collected, we have seen that :

The first is untenable in the light of M. Sazonoff's written report, in August, after his conversation with M. Poincaré ; that the second is disproved by the two definite statements contained in the *Yellow Book* ; and that it is not possible to estimate the third correctly unless M. Poincaré's statements are replaced amid the circumstances and at the date at which they were uttered, and with due consideration of the events that followed upon each other with such disconcerting rapidity in the autumn of 1912, that the statesmen of Europe constantly found themselves out in their reckoning.

Such being the case, are we not entitled to speak of the Legend of the Black Book, and to reject the sable pall wherewith the author of that publication would drape the monuments of our prewar history ?

Nothing stands out more clearly, throughout the Balkan crisis of 1912, than the moderation of the French Government, their insight, their loyalty to their alliances, their steadfastness at the most critical junctures, all of which did yeoman service for the peace of Europe.

The European Spirit of the French Policy

Were it necessary to adduce any further arguments in order to destroy the Legend of the *Black Book*, there would be no difficulty in finding in that work more than one Russian testimony to the peaceful sentiments of France.

Shall we consider the relations between France and England ? This is how M. Iswolsky reports the French Premier's remarks concerning the visit to Germany, where he was *persona grata*, of Lord Haldane who repaired to Berlin at the Emperor William's invitation, on February 8, 1912, and remained there for two days, spent in negotiating with the Imperial Government (1) :

« M. Poincaré explained to me that the French Government could not but welcome the present attempt of England and Germany to establish normal relations the one with the other, and that this attempt does not give rise, on the part of France, to the slightest concern or misgiving as regards the British Government's perfect honesty of purpose.

« Rather would there be reason to fear the eventual failure of these negotiations, which might lead to a still greater embitterment of the Anglo-German relations, with the consequent result of a further threat to the peace of Europe. M. Poincaré's statements strike me as per-

(1) *Black Book*, p. 201.

fectly sincere and I endeavour, for my own part, to confirm him in his sanguine view of the matter. I cannot but observe, however that in military circles here a somewhat different view prevails ».

Here again, is how M. Poincaré views the question of an eventual Franco-British alliance :

« It is my firm belief that neither France nor England have any reason to wish for any change in their present relations. Recent events have shown that in the present situation of Europe, the community of interests between France and England and the understanding it gives rise to are so potent and so undeniable, that in the event of any serious complications whatever, the identity of policy as between the two countries is adequately safeguarded thereby. The signing of any formal document, even supposing it not to be incompatible with the French, or with the British Constitutions, would give no additional weight to that safeguard. For even should such an agreement be in existence, M. Asquith's recent public utterance to the effect that at the decisive moment the British Government would take no action that was not dictated by the British nation would lose nothing of its significance (1).

As regards the relations between France and Germany, testimony in support of the peaceful spirit of France and of her Government is constantly to be met with in the reports of the Russian Ambassador or of his « Chargé d'Affaires ». In this respect we would refer our readers to pp. 5, 16, 34 and 220 of the *Black Book*.

If we now turn to the relations between France and the Balkan States, notably in connection with the Bulgarian loan, which latter a hostile propaganda imputes as a crime

(1) *Black Book*, p. 269.

to M. Poincaré, what do we find ? Writing on September 12, M. Iswolsky states :

« M. Poincaré also told me that in the present circumstances the French Government were obliged to observe great circumspection in the matter of the Bulgarian Loan ; M. de Panafieu writes from Sofia that a blunt refusal as regards this matter might prove a serious blow for the Cabinet under M. Gnéchov. M. Poincaré, however, will withhold his authorisation for this loan until he is convinced that the danger has been averted and until he has received the corresponding guarantees as regards his message » (2).

Nevertheless, M. Iswolsky does not fail to discern that a transformation has taken place in French public opinion since the crisis of 1905. In this respect the Russian Ambassador supplies the following testimony which is worth recording in conclusion. The letter is dated February 15, 1912 (2).

« I remember that in the course of a conversation shortly after Algéciras, the Emperor William, to my great astonishment, held forth to me as follows : « The question of « Alsace-Lorraine is settled once for all, for France has « refused the proffered duel, thereby formally and unconditionally submitting to the full consequences of the « Frankfort treaty ». Henceforward, after the events of last summer, the Emperor William will have to give up that line of reasoning, for as I wrote to you on several occasions, France has evinced an undeniable determination not to shrink from arming, if needs be, in defence of her rights and interests. »

But though the policy of the French Government aimed at the complete development of the Triple Entente in

(2) *Black Book*, p. 193.

view of the defence of the rights and interests of all three Powers, the constant thought of the French Government was to prevent the Balkan issue from bringing the Triple Entente into dangerous antagonism with the Triple Alliance.

The most striking feature is the European spirit in which the French Government acted throughout the Balkan crisis.

They made this principle their guiding rule as soon as in the second half of August 1912, Count Berchtold's action in opposing an Austro-Hungarian, to a Russian plan of reforms in the East threatened to endanger the harmony of Europe.

« You may at once proceed » wrote M. Poincaré, on September 1, to our ambassador at Vienna, to express, as a personal statement, the opinion that the French Government, firmly attached to the Triple Entente, pursue in the East no object of exclusive interest, but that they consider the cooperation of all the Powers as necessary to the settlement of the Balkan problem » (1).

A few days later, on September 4, Count Berchtold expressed to M. Dumaine, our representative, his keen appreciation of this disposition of the French Cabinet.

Nor does our diplomacy venture to depart from this attitude, whether the prime mover in the case be St. Petersburg, Berlin, or Vienna.

A case in point, as mentioned above, was the question of the guarantee of reforms in Macedonia, applied for on September 19 by M. Sazonoff, and which M. Poincaré at once subordinated to the assent of the Vienna and Berlin Cabinets (2).

(1) *Yellow Book*, N° 88.

(2) *Yellow Book*, N° 98. 1

The same position was taken by us a few days later, in September 22, in the matter of the invitation addressed by the Triple Entente to the Imperial German Government and to the Imperial and Royal Austro-Hungarian Government, in view of jointly approaching the Cabinets of Sofia, Belgrade, Athens and Cettigne and of tendering to them the advice to undertake no action of a nature to disturb the peace.

Is the objection raised that the Triple Alliance might take umbrage at a joint move of this description on the part of the three Powers of the Entente ?

Very well, replies M. Poincaré, the French Government are quite prepared to take the initiative of such conversations upon themselves alone, as far as Germany and Austria-Hungary are concerned (1).

Nor did the Bavarian Government fail to recognise our good intentions. On October 5, M. Allizé wrote from Munich; « People here observe composedly the negotiations that have been entered upon with a view to endeavouring to avert the conflict, and they all unite in giving Your Excellency credit for attempting to bring about an agreement on this subject between the Great Powers. » (2)

When dealing with the Berlin Cabinet, a month later, the French Government applied the same principles.

On November 18, the German Foreign Secretary having taken the initiative of enumerating the five points of general interest the Great Powers should reserve for their own decision at the time of the peace settlement in the Balkans, M. Poincaré replied :

« The French Government are quite prepared to pursue with all the Powers the conversation relating to the

(1) *Yellow Book*, N° 102.

(2) *Yellow Book*, 154.

five points mentioned by M. Von Kiderlen-Waechter (1). »

A few days later, on November 23, M. Von Kiderlen-Waechter changed his mind and sought to reserve the Albanian question and that of an approach to the Adriatic for the exclusive consideration of Austria-Hungary and Italy.

M. Poincaré again approved himself a good European and telegraphed to M. Jules Cambon.

« I look upon it as essential that *every* Power should have a voice in the settlement of *every* question (2). »

We possess, moreover, as regards the spirit that animated the French policy during this period, testimony to which M. Poincaré's severest critic can take no exception. In the Chamber of Deputies, on December 20, 1912, after hearing the explanations in connection with the Balkan conflict, given by M. Poincaré at the end of the sitting, M. Jaurès delivered himself as follows :

« Let it suffice that at the present juncture M. Poincaré has shown a sincere desire for peace, that he has given Europe that impression, and that he has realised that the duty of France is to cooperate loyally in its fulfilment. I am grateful, also, to remember that from the very beginning of the crisis the Prime Minister led the way in the initiation of those general conversations between all countries that have soothed and allayed the conflict and that have just culminated in the Ambassadors' Conference that has now met in London. »

Then, after voicing his desire for a mediation of the Great Powers, subject to their all being of one mind, M. Jaurès added :

« If you continue to carry out the policy of France in

(1) *Yellow Book*, N° 264.

(2) *Yellow Book*, N° 278.

that spirit, M. le President, you will be doing work both of a very useful and of a very lofty character. As for myself, after all the trials we have experienced, trials of conscience, trials of reason, the sorrow of witnessing the recurrence, in our present alleged state of civilisation, of the horrors of slaughter, the horrors of falsehood and double-dealing, it is a great comfort to me to find that, in spite of all these antagonisms, such deep-rooted forces are at work, making for peace, that an issue which would formerly have threatened to overwhelm the peace of the world in universal chaos, will, we trust, be settled in favour of the right of self-determination, if not entirely without bloodshed, then at least without anything in the nature of a general war (Applause on the benches of the Extreme Left). »

* * *

That the *Black Book* should figure prominently in the propagandist library of our enemies does not surprsie us in the least, considering the evident collusion between that work and the German *White Book*. Nor, will we wax indignant when we see William II, turning his abode at Doorn into a sub-office of the German Propaganda Bureau, pronounce in favour of M. Iswolsky's reading, against that of the Russian Foreign Minister, in the matter of the coming into play of the *casus foederis* as between France and Russia.

But if the reconstruction of Europe be desired, would it not be as well to create such moral conditions as shall permit of the resumption of our common labours. And for this purpose is it not first and foremost necessary to destroy all legends ?

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